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Questions and Answers About the **GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

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What is the Great Plains Conservation Program?

The Great Plains Conservation Program, public Law 1021, is intended to help speed up the objectives of the total Great Plains Program developed by the United States Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Great Plains Agricultural Council. The total program includes cost sharing, credit, and technical assistance in soil and water conservation; and crop insurance; weather studies; research; and education.

As a new tool of the total Great Plains Program, the Great Plains Conservation Program supplements existing activities and does not replace any of them.

How does the Great Plains Conservation Program differ from other programs?

By law, the program under Public Law 1021 must be based on a farm or ranch conservation plan of operations.

The program guarantees Federal cost sharing for applying needed soil and water conservation practices for a long period (up to 10 years but no later than December 31, 1971).

The program applies only to counties designated by the Secretary of Agriculture in the 10 Great Plains States.

The program emphasizes land use changes and wind-erosion control and moisture conservation and management practices that in combination will provide the most enduring conservation benefits.

What is the purpose of the program?

The purpose of the program is to help you carry out a plan of operations that will help to minimize climatic hazards and protect your land from erosion and deterioration by natural causes.

How will the program help me?

The program will help you solve difficult long-term land use and conservation problems on your farm or ranch. It will enable you to plan your farm or ranch operations so as to minimize the hazards of weather extremes. It will enable you to make necessary changes in land use and shifts in type of operation. It will enable you to establish needed soil and water conservation measures with the help of Federal cost shares that are guaranteed for a long period (up to 10 years).

Am I eligible?

You are eligible to participate in this voluntary program if you own, or otherwise control, for the period needed to carry out a plan of operations, a farm or ranch in a designated county in the 10 Great Plains States.

Where do I apply?

You may apply at any county office of the United States Department of Agriculture in the Great Plains.

What are the requirements?

To participate in the program you must have a workable plan of operations that incorporates (1) needed land use changes (2) needed cropping and grazing systems, and (3) needed soil and water conservation practices in proper combinations. Your plan of operations includes a schedule that calls for carrying out all measures in a period not to exceed 10 years.

You then enter into a contract with the Secretary of Agriculture to carry out your plan. The contract includes your plan of operations, your time schedule for doing the planned jobs, and the amount of cost shares to be paid by the Federal Government.

Who will help me make my plan?

You are responsible for making your own plan of operations. It must be technically sound and acceptable to the Secretary of Agriculture. You can get help from your local Soil Conservation Service technician. Soil and range site maps and other information will be provided.

How long will I have help in carrying out my plan?

You will have cost-sharing help as long as you reasonably need it. However, it cannot be less than 3 years nor more than 10 years.

The contract—who signs it?

You and a contracting officer of the Soil Conservation Service, acting for the Secretary of Agriculture, sign the contract.

What measures are included?

Measures eligible for cost sharing include: Establishing permanent plant cover, field or contour stripcropping, contour cultivation, improving range cover, planting trees or shrubs for windbreaks or shelterbelts, establishing waterways, building terrace systems, chiseling or pitting rangeland, improving dams or ponds for irrigation, constructing wells for livestock, installing pipe, fencing, and controlling brush.

How much cost sharing will I get?

How much cost sharing you will get depends on the cost of doing the needed work and the rate established by the State and County Program Committees. The maximum cost-share rate will not exceed 80 percent of the average estimated cost of installing each eligible practice.

When will I be paid cost shares?

You will receive a cost-share payment when you have carried out a practice or an identifiable unit of your plan and have applied for payment. The contracting officer of SCS must certify performance and compliance with the program before you receive payment.

What if I've been working on a conservation plan?

If you have carried out all or part of a soil and water conservation plan in cooperation with your soil conservation district or through another program, you may still apply for cost-sharing help. You may apply for help on additional measures that may be needed or for changes in the earlier plan that may be advisable. The governing bodies of soil conservation districts are cooperating in carrying out the Great Plains Conservation Program.

May I change my plan?

When you and the contracting officer agree there is need for changing your schedule or plan, you and the contracting officer may reschedule a practice and modify your plan accordingly.

What happens to my acreage allotment?

Your cropland-acreage allotment will not be decreased by any actions you take in carrying out your plan under the Great Plains Conservation Program during the period of your contract.

What if I sell my place?

If you sell your place during the contract period, your contract is terminated. You will forfeit rights to any further cost-share payments. And you must refund all payments unless the new owner agrees to become a party to the contract and assumes the obligations.

Is there a limitation on the amount of cost shares I can earn?

There is no limitation on the amount of cost shares you may earn per year under this program except a limitation of \$2,500 for cost shares for improving dams or ponds for irrigation.

(The law provides that total cost shares paid to Great Plains farmers and ranchers under this program in any one year shall not exceed \$25 million.)

May I use other programs in carrying out my plan?

You may use all existing programs and sources of assistance in developing and carrying out your plan, such as the Agricultural Conservation Program and the Soil Bank.

May I graze land under this contract?

Yes, you may use for grazing, or for other purposes consistent with good management, the land established in vegetative cover under your Great Plains Conservation Program contract. This contract, however, supplements and does not cancel other contracts or agreements you may have, such as those with the Soil Bank.

Interagency group

Policies and operating procedures for the Great Plains Conservation Program were developed by a Great Plains interagency group in the United States Department of Agriculture and approved by the Secretary of Agriculture. This group consists of the Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Conservation Program Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, Commodity Stabilization Service, Farmers Home Administration, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, Federal Extension Service, Forest Service, and Office of Information.

